



Strengthening Child Welfare Systems through Interdisciplinary Practice

The New Mexico Family Advocacy Program (NMFAP) provides parents in child welfare cases an interdisciplinary legal team composed of a respondent attorney, licensed social worker and parent mentor (a parent who has lived child welfare system experience) so that families are given enhanced advocacy and support for reunification or other preferred outcomes.

The NMFAP began as a pilot project in 2013 (formerly known as the Family Support Services) within the Thirteenth Judicial District. In September 2018, the Administrative Office of the Courts was awarded a five year (2018-2023), \$7.7 million grant from the Children's Bureau to further develop and scale the program across the state.

The program adapts the [Cornerstone Advocacy](#) model created by the New York Center for Family Representation, which focuses on intensive advocacy, especially within the first sixty (60) days of the case. This elevated model of parent representation helps hasten time to permanency for families, facilitates better outcomes, and improves parent and youth engagement with the Children, Youth and Family Department (CYFD) caseworkers, foster parents and service providers.

The NMFAP currently provides services in Bernalillo County (2nd Judicial District), Sandoval County and Valencia County (13th Judicial District), and has recently expanded its reach to Cibola County (13th Judicial District) in July 2021 and San Juan County (11th Judicial District) in October 2021. Upon approval from the Children's Bureau, future expansion is anticipated in 2022 to McKinley County (11th Judicial District) and Doña Ana County (3rd Judicial District).

The goals of the NMFAP are to:

- strengthen partnerships between state, tribal, county and community partners;
- effectively engage parents in their case planning process and treatment plans;
- focus on the achievement of timely permanency and more reunifications for children and families;
- help parents identify relative resources for placement and potential guardianships/adoptions earlier in the process;
- appropriately assess and mitigate safety and risk factors in families;
- provide timely and individualized services, resources, and supports for parents; and,
- increase parents' capacities to protect and provide for their child(ren) long-term.



NMFAP website: <https://nmfap.nmcourts.gov/>